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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001511

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/09/25

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SUBJECT: Embassy Athens Engages with GoG on Iran

REF: A) ATHENS 1483; B) ATHENS 1479

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Embassy Athens' Front Office and Political Section have engaged with our Greek partners from the highest levels to the working level at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to expand our dialogue on Iran. Characterizing the Iranian regime as weak, Greek interlocutors maintain that they favor pushing Iran first on nuclear issues before human rights issues, and favor targeted and specific sanctions via the UNSC framework if talks fail to produce results. The GoG continues to demarche Iran on nuclear issues but officials seem skeptical about the possibility of positive results. GoG interlocutors are also skeptical that further UNSC sanctions will be approved, given indications by Russia and China. They note that Greece would not break consensus if the EU decides to impose further sanctions as a package deal. END SUMMARY.

AMBASSADORIAL ENGAGEMENT

12. (C) In meetings with MFA Secretary General on September 14 and again with Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis on September 16 Ambassador Speckhard encouraged the GoG to play a strong role within the international community to encourage Iran to make the right choices. He urged the Secretary General to make public and private statements before the IAEA General Conference and UNGA on the need for Iranian compliance. Katsoudas said that he would follow up but was skeptical that such statements would have any effect. As described in Ref. A, Ambassador Speckhard also encouraged the Foreign Minister to make strong public and private statements about Iran now and during her time at the UNGA. (Note: Since this meeting the Foreign Minister's office announced that she will not be travelling to UNGA, due to illness. End Note.)

DCM UNDERSCORES MESSAGE WITH MFA INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND GEOGRAPHIC OFFICES

13. (C) DCM met with D1 Directorate for the UN and International Organizations Acting Director Manolis Papadogiorgakis September 17

to discuss coordinated action in response to Iran at the IAEA General Conference and UNGA. September 21 she met with A6 Middle East Directorate Head Ambassador Themistoklis Dimidis to seek Greece's perspective on Iran and opinion on prospects for the upcoming P5+1 talks.

14. (C) In her discussion with Papadogiorgakis the DCM noted the ongoing IAEA General Conference, pointed to our earlier demarche (Ref B), thanked Greece for its positive role thus far, and encouraged Greece to lobby for EU unity against the Arab League's Israeli Nuclear Capabilities resolution. Turning to the UN General Assembly, she urged the Greek delegation in New York to call publicly on Iran to accept a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue and to fulfill its international responsibilities. While keeping a focus on Iran's international obligations with regard to its nuclear program, she highlighted the Iranian regime's terrible human rights record, and noted that we must remain cognizant of that, as well. She asked Papadogiorgakis for the Greeks' views on Iranian ambitions.

15. (C) Papadogiorgakis shared his assessment that the Iranian regime was in a weakened state following the elections, and believed that the West needed to push, but at the same time give an opportunity to the Iranian government to react positively. He urged that Iran not be backed into a corner, believing that

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diplomacy with Iran had a better chance now, as cracks existed in Iranian society. He urged that principal players find greater "carrots" for Iran. He assured the DCM that bilaterally, in both Tehran and Athens, Greece urges Iran to cooperate fully with the international community.

16. (C) Later, Dimidis shared his assessment of the internal political climate in Iran, commenting that the Iranian people do not agree with the revolution anymore. Dimidis speculated that we are "seeing the beginning of the end of the revolution in Iran" and that the regime will collapse from the inside. He noted that the Greek embassy in Tehran has been treading lightly in recent months, as they do not want to indirectly support Iranian President Ahmadinejad but also cannot openly assist the opposition for fear of rousing the suspicious of the Iranian government. Regarding nuclear negotiations Dimidis argued that Iran is trying to gain more time through talking but does not think that Iran will actually deliver and make concessions at talks such as the P5+1.

17. (C) Dimidis reiterated Greece's preference for sanctions that are targeted and specific and lamented the difficulty of applying sanctions that would target the right people and institutions and actually produce favorable results. Dimidis noted that the British government was thinking about imposing energy sanctions on Iranian banks and oil exports but that Greece did not support these types of sanctions. Keeping with the previous GoG position, as expressed at the September GAERC, Dimidis said that Greece will follow if the EU decides to impose more sanctions but would first like to see the international community try to convince the Iranian side to come to the table. He noted that UN sanctions would be preferable to EU sanctions but was very skeptical that UN Security Council members Russia and China would agree to this. Counselor Stelios Gavriil added that any additional sanctions should be part of a package deal.

18. (C) While acknowledging serious human rights issues in Iran, Dimidis asserted that the international community must focus on one issue at a time with Iran, in order to avoid Iran refusing to come to the negotiating table at all. He noted that Greece sees the

Iranian nuclear issue as the most important issue to tackle at present, rather than taking Iran to task for human rights offenses. Dimidis also thought that the detention and intimidation of British and French embassy staff in Tehran was calculated to distract attention from the nuclear issue.

19. (C) Lastly, Dimidis and Gavriil raised the Middle East Peace Process as the second issue of great interest to Greece in the Middle East region. They asked for confirmation about a "meeting of three" between the leaders of the United States, Israel and the Palestinian Authority and expressed hope that Special Envoy Mitchell could bring about concrete results. Gavriil expressed desire to see negotiations get straight to the point and shared his opinion that Hamas should be included in the negotiating process, especially given that "many from the EU already talk to Hamas directly or indirectly." DCM McCarthy expressed gratitude for GoG support for the peace process and encouraging words about S/E Mitchell and promised to keep A6 informed as new information on the negotiations comes available.
Speckhard